

No more. Before I go any further, I want to make sure the substance of my concern is clear. No more media consolidation. Why? It threatens the very bedrock of our democracy.

We live in a world where National mass media has gained more and more power over our lives.

The consolidation of television, radio, and newspaper has been consolidated to a level that rivals the railroad monopolies of the 19th century. This combined with the combination of one owner not just owning the movie studio that makes the movie, but the distribution company, the publishing company that will publish the book, the book store that will sell the book, the magazine companies that will do write-ups about it, the tv and radio stations that will cover it, the cable stations that will have their talk shows put in plugs for it. We end up being inundated by one point of view.

Perhaps this is not so bad when it's about a product or new movie. But what happens when it is about whether our country should go to war. Or what happens when these mechanisms are used to silence voices? How many news stories did we hear that our government was on the path to suspending habeas corpus? How many talk shows were talking about what that meant and what the implications of that were? How many news stories before the passage of the detainee bill were informing the people that not since 1215 had people not had the right to question their accusers, and the United States the land of the free was on the path to stripping that away, and indeed did.

What about the legislation that threatens net neutrality? How much air play has that received from mainstream media? A fundamental change to the way one of the greatest sources of information the American people has is on the precipice of changing and it is not big news, not worth covering? I find that hard to believe. Or is it a conflict of interest of the few who currently own the news outlets.

Recently, ABC aired a Disney documentary more fantasy than facts. There were no commercials. Who paid for it? I am not sure if the facts are in. Perhaps Richard Mellon Scaife, but one man can pay for what was it 6 hours of television that purports to be facts that

attempts to influence our political decisions.

We have FOX which far from being fair and balance gives a neoconservative bent to their newscasting.

Fox Viewers

- 33% believe the US has found WMD in Iraq
- 35% believe world favored US invasion of Iraq
- 67% believe U.S. has found links between Iraq and Al Qaeda

PBS Viewers

- 11% believe the US has found WMD in Iraq
- 5% believe world favored US invasion of Iraq
- 16% believe U.S. has found links between Iraq and Al Qaeda

(Program on International Policy Attitudes) Knowledge/Networks Poll

Perhaps this is freedom of speech and its not so bad when it is 2 out of 100, but when it is 2 out of 6. That was the last count the owners now are Viacom, Disney, FOX, Clearvision, Time/Warner/Turner, and GE. In 1983, according to Ben Bagdikian, 50 corporations dominated the media (newspapers, TV, radio, books, magazines, movies, and so on). This is what consolidation has done to the media landscape; it has decimated diversity, consolidating ownership and concentrating the opinions of the owners that they in turn are foisting on their media empires, which we the American people mistake for news.

Pulitzer once stated in his editorial-page that his newspaper, "will always fight for progress in Reform, never tolerate in justice or corruption, always fight demagogues of all parties, ... always oppose privileged classes and public plunderers, never lack sympathy for the poor, always be drastically independent, never be afraid to attack wrong, whether by predatory plutocracy or predatory poverty" (Alger, 1998, p. 29).

Today, those in control of the news media could never take that stand, for they are the corrupters, they are the privileged classes, and they are the plunderers. How can NBC report the deaths of the workers at Knowles Atomic Power Plant, which were caused by exposure to unsafe levels of asbestos and radiation, when this power plant is

owned and operated by General Electric? They cannot. In fact, the makers of the video which chronicle this story entitled Deadly Deception stated, "Because GE owns NBC we have had a hard time getting our message out" (Chasnoff, 1991). Michael Moore had a difficult time getting distribution for his movie Fahrenheit 9/11, because Disney, who also owns ABC, owns Miramax films, was unwilling to release the film for distribution. As we know, this film did not paint a positive picture of President George W. Bush. However, is this not the antithesis of democracy to stifle the exchange of ideas in the marketplace? This is nothing more than corporate censorship.

In Alexandra Kitty's new book, Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism, based on the documentary by Robert Greenwald, Outfoxed, she writes, "people need unfiltered and accurate information to navigate through and make the right decisions in their lives. Without knowing the real story, the public is lulled into believing that everything is all right with their world, even as all the subtle, muted signs are desperately screaming that a cataclysm is fast approaching"

If you want lull the public to sleep and destroy our democracy you will continue with more media consolidation. If you care about the democracy the founders built, you will cease with any more media consolidation, reexamine the damaging impacts of what we currently have, and apprise Congress.